

Statement of

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U.S. Department of Homeland Security

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“Sniffing Out Terrorism: The Use of Dogs in Homeland Security”

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Good Morning, Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Meek, Members of the Subcommittee, it is a privilege to appear before you today to discuss the training of canine teams within U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP).

I want to begin by expressing my gratitude to the Committee for holding this hearing on canine teams, helping us to bring attention to the accomplishments of this important program and the issues facing the program, to the forefront.

CBP's canine law enforcement program—one of several such Department of Homeland Security canine programs that both protects life and property and contributes to the Department's law enforcement and anti-terrorism missions—is the largest federal canine law enforcement program in the United States. CBP has trained and deployed thousands of canine teams in support of our anti-terrorism and traditional missions over the years. Working together at and between our Nation's official ports of entry, our canine teams are a critical component in CBP's layered approach to border protection and our ability to secure our border, protect our homeland and defend against the threats posed by potential terrorists, explosives, chemical weapons, illegal aliens, narcotics, and harmful agricultural pests and products.

The canine enforcement program is responsible for a significant proportion of narcotic seizures made by Customs and Border Protection at ports of entry, checkpoints, and between official ports of entry, accounting for more than 11,600 narcotic seizures totaling over 1,804,196 pounds of narcotics in FY 2004. The canine enforcement program was also responsible for detecting 40,296 concealed humans and the seizures of U.S. currency worth \$33 million in FY 2004. During FY 2004 the canine enforcement program was accountable for over 68,512 Quarantine Material Interceptions of plant products and over 17,956 Quarantine Material Interceptions of animal products with a combined weight of 6,552 pounds

Beginning next month, CBP canine team training will be realigned and consolidated under CBP's Office of Training and Development. It is important to note that operational control in the field will be retained by the Offices of Field Operations and Border Patrol. This consolidation of canine training is a major step for CBP toward our goal of forging a single, unified border enforcement agency for the United States and gaining efficiencies wherever possible. It is a good fit, and it makes sense; CBP's Office of Training and Development already manages most of CBP's training, including basic and advanced training for CBP Officers at the ports of entry and Border Patrol

Agents in between the ports. The merging of the canine training program will not only contribute to the efficiency of the training program but will also ultimately contribute to operational efficiency in that the training nomenclature and training processes will be unified as appropriate. Migration of the CBP Canine Training program toward common language and training processes will enhance the ability of Office of Border Patrol or Office of Field Operations Canine Teams to jointly respond to major threats or initiatives.

CBP has invested a lot of time and effort in examining how best to manage its two legacy canine team programs. Over a period of several months, subject matter experts from the Office of Field Operations and the Office of Border Patrol as well as other senior staff from throughout CBP, examined all aspects of CBP's canine programs and identified a number of best practices from across our agency. Under CBP's new model, operators retain control of canine field operations, and training assets are consolidated under a single canine team training program. As a result, CBP's capacity to train canine teams will increase, and canine team training will be improved by promulgating state-of-the-art training techniques and the best practices that evolved in both historically separate training programs.

Currently, CBP has approximately 1,187 canine teams deployed around the country. Our K-9 teams consist of 50% human detection/narcotic teams, approximately 40% are narcotic detection teams, and the remaining teams are other disciplines. CBP estimates that its new consolidated training program will train 246 teams in FY 2006, expandable to some extent with the addition of resources.

Although, CBP's canine teams came from legacy agencies, all of the teams receive formal training and certification through fully mature, highly respected courses of instruction. Canine teams are trained, certified and deployed in one or more detection disciplines: concealed human detection, narcotic detection, explosive detection, detection of currency, cadaver detection, detection of prohibited agricultural products, open field tracking and trailing and the detection of chemicals associated with weapons of mass destruction.

All canine enforcement teams are certified prior to field deployment; are subject to regular training maintenance requirements, and undergo annual performance evaluations to maintain certification of their detection capability. CBP maintains accurate records on the performance of each team, and CBP canine teams answer to the same rules, regulations and supervisory chain-of-command as the rest of the operational workforce.

Each supervisor exercising control over canine enforcement teams is required to observe detector dog performance during employment and proficiency training. Supervisors responsible for canine enforcement teams ensure that each officer conducts mandatory proficiency training.

Canine Teams assigned to airports and seaports examine vessels, baggage, cargo, mail, and passengers. Teams stationed at land border crossings devote their

time to examining vehicles and merchandise entering the United States. Canine teams can be utilized to search for a trained odor in most any area imaginable. During every workday, canine teams conduct training exercises to enhance the dog's performance in the work environment. Canine teams are a wonderful tool, able to detect potential terrorists and concealed contraband hidden from view, using only the most basic of tools, common sense at one end of the leash and an amazing sense of smell at the other end.

It is also important to note that our canine teams have a special niche in our border enforcement strategy, a niche that so far is unchallenged by any competing technology. No machine can match the speed, accuracy and flexibility of a canine team searching for hidden narcotics, humans, currency, explosives, or pests in the hectic environment that exists in airports, seaports, land ports or Border Patrol checkpoints. For example, at border ports a canine team can examine a vehicle in 5 to 6 minutes. Even a cursory search by a CBP Officer without a canine would require at least 20 minutes. Canines can check packages in a fraction of the time needed by mail examiners. A canine team can process 400 to 500 packages in approximately 30 minutes.

For all their strengths, canine teams also have limitations. Canine teams are also partnerships bonding one human and one animal. The strength of that partnership makes them effective; but canines and humans are live creatures and not interchangeable machine parts. That is, handlers and canines are not instantly interchangeable with other handlers and other canines. No part of CBP works harder or achieves more spectacular results than our enthusiastic, energetic, and effective canine teams. As canine handlers will tell you, this is not a job, it's a passion. Any factor that can affect a human or a canine, including heat, cold, fatigue, illness or age can affect canine team performance.

CBP's Canine program is well known in the canine community as the benchmark that other canine programs are measured. During FY 2004, Customs and Border Protection signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the United States Coast Guard. Under this MOA, CBP stands ready to train all future Coast Guard narcotic and explosive detector dog teams. Throughout 2005 the CBP's Canine Enforcement Program continued to work with other federal law enforcement and intelligence agencies to develop training strategies and protocols based on real-world threats and intelligence trends. Most notable were CBP's sustained cooperative efforts with the Federal Bureau of Investigations, the Transportation and Security Administration, and the United States Coast Guard.

CBP recognizes canine teams serve an important role in CBP's enforcement operations, but CBP is continuously evaluating the efficacy of all its tools, and making informed choices about the right mix of personnel, technology, equipment, and infrastructure. Based on CBP's recent review of canine operations and canine team

training, it is certain that canine teams will continue to play an important role in CBP for the foreseeable future.

Thank you again for this opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any of your questions.